

Deer-Resistant Landscaping



SUE COLAO

Outfitting the yard with new flowers, plants, shrubs and trees is one of the great joys of being a homeowner. But that joy can quickly turn to sorrow if deer are eating up all the money and time you've spent beautifying your yard.

STORY BY
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Charlotte Glenn**

Deer are prevalent in many areas of Dare and Currituck counties, and they can decimate a landscape setting in just a few nights. Deer are not likely to change their grazing habits anytime soon, and humans are not likely to give up their desires to beautify their surroundings. So how can the two populations co-exist?

You can install expensive fencing or spend your free time applying repellents to your plants on a regular basis – or you can take the easier route and landscape your yard with plants that deer don't like to eat.

The plants deer prefer to eat vary regionally and seasonally, but there are some general guidelines about which plants are the most and least deer-resistant. In general:

- Deer prefer vegetation that is soft to the touch and high in water content. They especially like flower buds.
- Over fertilized and over watered plants are particularly

appealing to deer.

- The main characteristics of plants that deer dislike are:
 - Plants with thorny or prickly leaves
 - Plants with strong scents and pungent tastes, such as herbs
 - Plants that are poisonous or produce thick latex-like sap
 - Plants with hairy leaves

But keep in mind that no plant is entirely deer-proof. Starving deer will eat just about anything to survive. And deer will eat almost anything in spring, especially the tender new growth emerging from plants. Therefore, you may need to look into caging new and young plants in spring.

A knowledgeable landscaping professional can help you select deer-resistant plants and help you formulate a plan of action for protecting your plants as they get established. And a professional can help you select deer-resistant plants that work well together and create an eye-pleasing landscape.

If you are knowledgeable enough to landscape on your own, then the following lists provide information about which plants are typically deer resistant and which plants are typically deer attractors. This information was compiled by Charlotte Glenn, an

FROM THE
GROUND UP

deer-resistant

extension agent of agriculture and horticulture with the North Carolina Cooperative Extension, Pender County Center. Glenn says that Dare and Pender counties are similar enough that the deer preferences for her area also apply here.

"Most likely our deer have similar tastes, but some localized populations of deer have different tastes," says Glenn. "Just remember, there are no guarantees. A starving deer will eat anything to survive."

NOTE: In the following lists:

The plants in **bold** are particularly resistant to deer damage. Plants with a * are native to the southeastern United States.

TREES

Deer injure trees in two ways: by eating foliage and twigs, and by rubbing against the bark with their antlers, which is especially damaging to young trees or

those with thin bark. Deer damage is most common on trees that are young and still small enough for deer to reach the leaves and twigs, or those trees that do not grow very large. In deer-prone landscapes, trees that grow tall and hold their branches high are the best choice, though they may need protection with wire cages until their branches are high enough to be out of a deer's reach.

Seldom Damaged Trees

Red buckeye*
River birch*
Deodar cedar
Hawthorn*
Japanese cedar
Ginkgo
Honey locust*
American holly*
Eastern redcedar*
Crape myrtle
Southern magnolia*
Sweetbay magnolia*
Black gum*
Pines*
Carolina cherry laurel*

Japanese flowering cherry

Live oak*

Bald cypress*

Chastetree

Frequently Damaged Trees

Redbud*
Atlantic white cedar*
Fringe tree*
Crabapples
Cherries and plums
Pears

EVERGREEN SHRUBS

Seldom Damaged Shrubs

Abelia
Century plant
Wintergreen barberry
Japanese boxwood
Bottlebrush
Plum yew
Pepperbush
Eleagnus
Loquat
Gardenia
Chinese holly
Yaupon



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FROM THE
GROUND UP

deer-resistant



Inkberry
Anise shrub
Chinese juniper
Wax myrtle
Nandina
Oleander
Tea olive
Southern yew
Pyracantha
Rosemary
Yucca

Frequently Damaged Evergreen Shrubs

Japanese Euonymus
Wintercreeper
Fatsia
Aucuba
Indian hawthorn
Pittosporum
Azaleas
Arborvitae

DECIDUOUS SHRUBS

Seldom Damaged Deciduous Shrubs

Japanese barberry
Butterflybush
Sweetshrub*
American beautyberry*
Blue mist shrub
Deutzia
Fothergilla*
Winter jasmine



Spring flowering spireas

Frequently Damaged Deciduous Shrubs

Burning bush
Roses
Blueberries

ORNAMENTAL GRASSES

In general, deer avoid ornamental grasses, so they should be considered highly resistant to deer damage. Ornamental grasses live a long time and are hardy, making them low-maintenance additions to a landscape.

Highly Resistant Grasses
Korean feather reed grass
River oats*
Pampass grass
Maiden grass
Pink muhly grass*
Blue muhly grass*
Panic grass*
Fountain grass
Indian grass*

VINES AND GROUNDCOVERS

Seldom Damaged Vines and Groundcovers
Bugleweed

Crossvine*
Climbing fig
Carolina jessamine
Junipers
Coral honeysuckle*
Partridgeberry*
Mondo grass
Cherokee rose
Creeping rosemary
Star jasmine
Confederate jasmine
Large leaf periwinkle
Periwinkle, Vinca

Frequently Damaged Vines and Groundcovers

Clematis
Wintercreeper
English Ivy

FERNS

Deer rarely eat fern foliage.

HERBS AND ORNAMENTALS

Deer tend to avoid plants with strong fragrances, so most herbs are deer-resistant. Rosemary is a wonderful herb/ornamental for coastal area gardens.

PERENNIALS

Seldom Damaged Perennials

Yarrow
Columbine
Artemisia
Butterflyweed
Cast iron plant
Blue star*
False indigo*
Angel's trumpet
Green and Gold*
Coreopsis*
Dianthus
Purple coneflower*
Joe Pye weed*
Guara*
Blanket flower
Lenten rose
Lantana
Coralbells*
Sleeping hibiscus*
Bee balm*
Catmint
Russian sage
Anise sage
Mexican bush sage



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FROM THE
GROUND UP

deer-resistant

Purple heart
Fireworks goldenrod*
Lambs ear
Society garlic
Prickly pear*

Frequently Damaged Perennials

Daylilies
Hosta

ANNUALS

Seldom Damaged Annuals

Ageratum
Snapdragons
Begonia
Ornamental peppers
Cleome
Coleus
Cosmos
Polka dot plant
Melampodium
Pentas
Mexican oregano
Marigold
Curry plant
Vinca
Dusty miller
Zinnias
Petunias

Frequently Damaged Annuals

Celosia
Impatiens
Sweet potato
Johnny jump ups
Pansies

BULBS

Frequently Damaged Bulbs

Tulips
Crocus
Lilies

Seldom Damaged Bulbs

Daffodils
Snowflake
Amaryllis
Scillas
Ornamental onions
Agapanthus
Crinum lilies
Crocasmias
Oxalis
Colchicum
Hardy cyclamen ■

OTHER YARD AND GARDEN PESTS

Rabbits

Those cute little bunnies you see hopping around your yard can wreak havoc on your vegetable garden, flowers, trees and shrubs year round. Rabbits' diet consists of a variety of plants, including succulent herbaceous materials, bark, fruit, seeds and foliage of woody plants, flowers and vegetables. Control is often necessary to reduce damage, but don't think you're ever going to completely eradicate the rabbit. You can somewhat control their damage – but it won't be easy.

Rabbit controls include: low fences to protect gardens or shrubs; hardware cloth cylinders around fruit trees and ornamental plants; removal of brush piles and other potential rabbit cover; frightening the critters with a variety of techniques; taste repellents applied to the plants; trapping and relocating; and (don't read this if you're an animal lover) sport shooting, which the N.C. Cooperative Extension service lists as a "very effective" method.

Eastern Mole

Moles live underground and make tunnels, small mounds and extensive ridges in yards. They feed on worms and insects, not plants. To control moles, the Cooperative Extension suggests ground insecticides to kill their food supply. In North Carolina, moles are classified as wild, nongame animals and cannot be killed without a permit.

Meadow Vole

Voles dig small shallow burrows and trails in grass. They also gnaw trees or shrubs from the ground level up, even under mulch. Damage occurs to trees and shrubs from slightly below the ground level and up. To control voles, mow the lawn closely. You can also use mouse traps placed in runs and covered with tar paper or a large flower pot.

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